

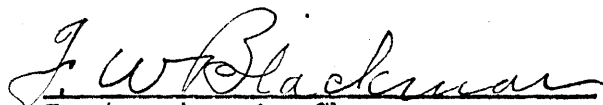
THE RELIGION AND CUSTOMS  
OF THE CHUHRA  
IN THE  
PUNJAB PROVINCE, INDIA

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The facts set down in this paper will give a cross-section picture of Chuhra thought and worship as it is found today, together with its apparent significance to the Chuhra himself, rather than any history of its development. The forms of Chuhra religion have been influenced by successive waves of invasion and periods of rule. The time may come when research will uncover the story of the origin of the Chuhra, and of the growth of his customs and beliefs, but many elements of that story are as yet unknown.

In a discussion of this length it is obviously impossible to make an exhaustive study of any tribe or caste of people, or to attempt to cover the whole range of their ways and characteristics. Even having chosen one phase of Chuhra life, that of their religion, one finds the field to be covered is so wide and the elements so varied that many statements must be general rather than particular, and customs described will not be exactly as found in all places. It must not be supposed that all, or even most, of the beliefs set forth are peculiar to the Chuhra religion. Many are derived from orthodox Hinduism, some are Muhammedan, and these in turn are intermixed with, and modified by, other religious forms, such as Sikhism and Christianity.

Chuhras adapt themselves readily to the people among whom they live. Their position of dependence has

compelled them to develop adaptability, otherwise they could not have existed. Their religious practices, in common with other habits, are colored by their social environment. In Hindu villages their worship approximates that seen at Hindu shrines. In villages owned and inhabited by Muhammedans, the Chuhras dress, and cut their hair, like Muhammedans, and sometimes are definitely followers of the Muhammedan faith, called "Dindar" or "religious", to distinguish them from the Muhammedans of higher social standing. In Sikh communities even those not formally made followers of the Sikh religion by "pahul", or baptism, often wear the "kes" or long hair done up in a top-knot, together with other insignia of the Sikh religion, such as the iron bracelet, comb, etc., prescribed by the Sikh Gurus.

Those Chuhras who live among a mixed population often present to the onlooker a bewildering variety of customs. They may claim to follow all religions, as did the Athenians of Paul's day, and often they take part in the feasts and other observances of several religious sects. In spite of these facts, however, there is almost invariably a thread of peculiarly Chuhra thought and custom running through the worship. It is this that makes the Chuhra religion a real and distinct one and enables the student to identify it, though he may meet it in varying forms.

References to social status, history, and economic conditions of the Chuhra, as made in the first chapter are only those necessary to an understanding of the religious background of the people.

The facts described herein have been gathered during five years of observation in villages of the Punjab, from questionings of village and city Chuhras, from Sadhus and Faqirs of their caste, and from Christians who were formerly Chuhras, or who have lived among them.

The motive of this study has been a desire for acquaintance with the religious element in the life of these people, which will make possible a valuation of the various elements in their thought, and will establish new points of contact with them. Work among Chuhras does not ordinarily give a foreigner in India any particularly high standing among Hindus and Muhammedans, though they may admire the uplifting influences which have been set at work among these, who have so long been despised. But hardly anything in connection with work among them could be of more value or interest than an attempt to understand their religion. The village Chuhras are quick to appreciate any reference to things not ordinarily understood by the non-Indian inhabitants of the country.

## CHAPTER I

### THE CHUHRA

The Chuhra belongs to that part of Indian society, including more than fifty million people, known as the depressed classes, or the untouchables. He lives chiefly in the Punjab, a large section of fertile, if often arid, country on the northern border of India. It is the section having the hottest summers and coldest winters found in any of the Indian plains.

There is difference of opinion as to the racial origin of the Chuhras. Some hold that they are a pre-Aryan people, while others consider them to be a part of the population which came into India from the north.

The first view, which would make them of Dravidian ancestry, is supported by the fact that the average Chuhra is somewhat darker than the Brahmin or Sikh. That this is generally recognized is shown in the saying "A dark Brahmin, a fair Chuhra, a woman with a beard, these are contrary to nature." Again, the Chuhra has pre-Aryan elements in his religion, notably relics of totemism. In central and southern India, where the Dravidians are numerous, we find these elements in great abundance. This would seem to point to a connection of the Chuhra with the Dravidian peoples. Certain traditions of the Chuhras support a theory of their

non-Aryan origin. In Faridkot Native State Chuhras claimed that originally all the land was theirs, and that only when the present Hindu came from outside and conquered them did they become slaves and serfs on the land. A Chuhra Bhagat of Bawa, near Amritsar, says that they were in India before the arrival of the Hindu. If they are, indeed, of Dravidian blood, it would help explain their low position in the social scale, for such a disability would be the natural lot of a conquered race.

On the other hand there are strong arguments for classifying the Chuhras under the head of pure Aryan stock. Sir Herbert Risley, the leading ethnologist on India, who worked under the direction of the British Museum, supports a theory of such an origin in his "The People of India." He claims to have been able to distinguish clearly three main racial types in India, namely, Aryan, Dravidian, and Mongoloid, and he classifies the peoples under these heads, plus such names of mixed stock as Indo-Aryan, Scytho-Dravidian, Mongolo-Dravidian, etc. One of his methods of classification was according to physical characteristics. Without entering into any discussion as to the value of anthropometry, and especially of craniometry, his book may be quoted regarding the evidence of his investigations as related to the Chuhras. He says, "Socially, no gulf can be wider than that which divides the Rajputs of Udaipur and Marwar from the scavenging Chuhra of the Punjab. Physically the one is cast in much the same mold as the other," and again, "The Hindustani Brahmans, with a slightly

lower mean index (of nose) than the Chuhra of the Punjab, have a far larger proportionate admixture of Dravidian blood."

In spite of the proverb previously quoted about a fair Chuhra, it remains a fact that many of them are very fair. There may be significance in the fact, also, that they often have the same goth, or tribal, names as members of higher castes.

Whatever their origin, the Chuhras are now the poorest and most ignorant section of the population. Though usually classed as Hindus, they have no caste standing, but are rather below all castes. They have no access to Hindu temples, they cannot touch a Hindu's person, nor his dish, and no Brahman priest will minister to them. The Hindus have spurned them until recently, when a few lone figures like Mr. Gandhi have realized the moral weakness of such an attitude, and when a desire on the part of the Hindu community to hold a numerical superiority over the Muhammedans for political purposes has brought about a movement for their inclusion into Hinduism. Of the nine hundred and twenty-five thousand Chuhras listed in the Punjab in 1911, fourteen-sixteenths of them were classed as Hindu, one-sixteenth as Muhammedan, and one-sixteenth as Sikh. In Lahore district, however, where the Muhammedans out-number the Hindus almost three to one, there are about thirty thousand Chuhras entered as Muhammedan, with only seventy-one hundred classed as Sikh.

The Chuhra religion might be classed as Hindu, for, beginning with simple animistic beliefs, it shades gradually into Hindu-like thought, or at least assumes certain Hindu

forms and ceremonies. Some goddesses and godlings are held in common with Hindus. But this conformity to Hinduism has not resulted in procuring for the Chuhra any established rights within the community of two hundred and fifty million Hindus among whom he lives.

The "Nur Afshan" published in Lahore, in its issue of May 16, 1925, says that there are sixty million low caste people in India, who have not yet attached themselves to any religion brought into India from the outside. They have been called Hindu, yet the Hindus have never allowed them to enter the fold of Hinduism nor to set foot on the path of progress. To this day they are not Hindus, but, thanks to the religion of the Vedas, they are treated in a worse manner than animals.

While the Vedas themselves are not the basis for caste distinctions, the later Hindu scriptures not only permit, but enforce the social ostracism of the untouchable. The law of Manu, one of the "Smrite," or Books of Tradition, may be quoted. It is a collection of rules for social and legal usage, dating from the fifth or sixth century, B.C., and it says, "The dwellings of the Kandalas..... shall be outside the village,... and their wealth shall be dogs and donkeys. Their dress shall be the garments of the dead, they shall eat their food from broken dishes, black iron shall be their ornaments, and they must always wander from place to place. A man who fulfills a religious duty shall not seek intercourse with

\*See the Law of Manu, Müller's "Sacred Books of the East," Vol. XXV-, X-51-54, III-239, V-85.

them, their transactions shall be among themselves.....Their food shall be given to them by others in a broken dish; at night they shall not walk about in villages." Furthermore, along with pigs, cocks, and dogs, he must not even look at a Brahman while he eats, while the Brahman is required to bathe if he has touched a Kandala. In Manu punishment for crimes was much heavier for the low-caste than for criminals of higher standing.

The poverty of the Chuhra is a byword. They are often referred to in Punjab villages simply as the "garib log," or poor people. There are isolated instances of individuals who have accumulated enough for a comfortable living, according to oriental standards, but their number is only a small part of one per-cent of the whole community. The average Chuhra who lives in the city works as a sweeper and scavenger. It is here that his condition is worst, both socially and financially. He is not expected to own anything, and may receive almost no cash for his work, but is expected to live off the food he is given of the leftovers from the tables of others.

In the village his social position is not quite so bad, for his work is usually in the fields. Here also, however, he receives very little money. He is expected to take his pay in kind, a small proportion of the wheat and grain crop, and a certain amount of bread given each evening, usually enough for one member of his family. In addition



to these, he has certain legal rights of gathering sticks or manure as fuel and mustard leaves during the season for greens. Sometimes the worker is attached to a landholder as a "sepi," a sort of servant for one year, who helps with the crops and gets one-eleventh of the grain. A peculiarity of the arrangement is that, though he may help on all the crops, he does not share in some, particularly the cotton or sugar-cane. Another arrangement is that of the "siri," a man who gets one fifth of what one pair of oxen can tend. This is usually counted as a better arrangement than that of the "sepi" or "hissedar." The rest of the men work for daily wages, according as there may be demand and are known as "mazdurs." In nine villages surveyed in Lahore district there were forty nine sepis, fifty five siris, and a hundred and sixty mazdurs. Work of the daily wage earner is not regular. In the villages of the Lahore area a safe estimate would be that the average "mazdur" is employed about two hundred days out of the year. His income ranges from three to five dollars a month. Many villages are overstocked with labor. In one village the low caste people had practically no employment last year except during the time of the two harvests. In several villages investigated there was an average of about two acres of land per inhabitant, while in one village the amount of land per person was only one acre, though with few exceptions all the people were dependant on the land for their living. When it is remembered that a few men own all

the land and get a lion's share of the produce, it will be seen that the poorest section of the village population, represented by the Chuhras, has little prospect of a comfortable living.

Inevitable poverty is aggravated by the fact that the Chuhra usually owes money to the man for whom he works, and to the local merchants. A policy of the land holders in many places is to keep the sepi or siri in perpetual debt. This is easily accomplished by a small advance of cash at the beginning of the season, and manipulation of accounts so as to preclude full settlement of the debt at harvest. This, they feel, makes the Chuhra more tractable and easy to control.

The poverty of the Chuhra has led to customs repugnant to the Hindu mind, thereby adding virulence to his already deep aversion to low caste people. For instance the Chuhra will eat foxes and jackals, or worse still, carrion. Whenever an animal dies in the village, the Chuhras are required to carry it away. As pay, they get the skin. But gnawing hunger often leads them to take more than the skin, choice pieces are saved for the pot. It is not uncommon to see members of several families cutting off and carrying away parts of a dead ox, while fifteen or twenty scrawny dogs and a host of vultures crowd near, waiting for their turn.

It is said to be true in some localities that the Chuhras, when they need food, send one of the number, trained for the purpose, to poison an ox or buffalo. This

may be done through feeding or by use of a poisoned instrument. Rev. T. Grahame Bailey, of Wazirahad, says that each group of Chuhras is supposed to have an official cattle poisoner, who charges six annas (twelve cents) for killing a cow and eight annas for a buffalo. They have a secret vocabulary for use in speaking of these things, which makes their crimes difficult to detect. In the last Punjab census more than half a million people are listed as beggars, vagrants, prostitutes, receivers of stolen goods, and cattle poisoners.

The houses of the Chuhra are of sun-dried brick, covered with a plaster of mud, straw, and cow manure. The roof is of wooden rafters, grass, and mud, or may be a simple thatch. Furniture usually consists of a few rope and bamboo beds, which serve also as combined chair and table when desired. The stove is made of six or seven mud bricks, also plastered, built up inside during the winter and outside in the summer. When the fire is inside, the people sit on the floor to escape the smoke, which finds its way out the door as best it can. There is often no window, and though there may be a buffalo and several goats in the house with the family at night, the door is shut tight for warmth.

Opium eating and use of alcohol are prevalent in many communities. Two wives are allowed. Most cases of bigamy occur when a man dies and his brother takes his wife. This is considered a duty of the living brother.

The control of local groups of Chuhras, centering about a single shrine, or in a single village, is in the hands

of a "Panchaiyat." This is a group of leaders, theoretically, as the name signifies, numbering five, who issue orders, hear cases arising from conflicts within the community, and who formulate the policy of the group in its relation to outsiders. In addition to the organization under a panchaiyat, the group is generally subdivided among several head men, influential by reason of personal energy and leadership, who largely dictate regarding the activities of the families of their immediate following. These men have practically permanent position, and are the real leaders through whom the people may be reached.

Chuhras bury or burn their dead, according as the custom of their neighbors may be. Hindus, of course, invariably dispose of their dead by means of the funeral pyre, while Muhammedans use burying grounds.

Among Chuhras, a great ceremony is made of weddings, at which great crowds gather for the festivities of feasting and singing. Marriage arrangements are not made directly by the two families concerned, but through a third person, known as the "lagi."

In former days girls were little valued among the Chuhras. When baby girls died, or when, as is said to have sometimes occurred, they were killed, their bodies were buried in earthenware pots. Before burial, gur (crude sugar) was put in one hand and cotton in the other. Then the following was recited:

"Gur khain, puni katin,  
Ap na ain, bhaian nun ghallin,"

"Eat gur, spin cotton,  
don't return yourself,  
but send your brothers."

In modern times, however, girls are valuable. There is a law against selling daughters into marriage, but with the possibility of paying unlimited "ornament money," there is little real restriction on the sale of girls. Observation indicates that there are practically no marriages among Chuhras where the father of the girl does not profit financially. Perhaps part of the questionable ethics involved in the sale of girls is counterbalanced by the advantage to the girl of no longer being considered an undesirable member of the family. This custom of sale of girls differs radically from the custom among high caste Hindus of southern and western India, where a young man demands a large dowery with the girl he marries, so much so that the giving of dowery has become a heavy burden on certain classes of fathers.

## CHAPTER II

### LESSER OBJECTS OF WORSHIP

The great gods of the Hindus, the "dewas" or "shining ones," (related to the Latin word "deus") are to the Chuhras, as indeed to many Hindus, merely names. Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, as well as Varuna, Agni and Surya, not to mention the more obscure gods of Brahmanism, have no particular significance to the worshipper of Balmik, though he may recognize certain deified characters such as Hanuman, Ganesha, etc. Some, however, of the Dravidian goddesses adopted by Hinduism, cruel and fierce ones, such as Chandi dewi, Kali dewi, and Bhairon, are worshipped by the Chuhra.

Almost any Bhagat will tell you he worships all the Hindu devtas, but may be able to name very few of them. Even where actual offerings are made to the deities, there is often confusion as to the symbols used and the functions assigned to the different ones. In general, then, we find very little attention paid to the great Hindu gods. But it is equally true that the innumerable village godlings as found in southern India are not so prevalent among the low caste people of the Punjab. Occasional instances of nature worship may be the result of Hindu influence, for the Vedic gods are primarily the elements. Sacred rivers, mountains, trees, etc., common in India, must have originated in simple nature worship. For instance, Chuhras sometimes make offerings

to "Suraj Devta," the "Sun God," and "Dharti Mata," "Mother Earth."

In a great many communities the Chuhras join in worship of Muhammedan saints and "pirs." Near almost any Muhammedan village can be found one or more graves of important men, where lamps are lit every Friday, or where other worship is performed.

In Faridkot State, a few miles east of the capitol city, is a small piece of waste land where a yearly mela is held. It marks the supposed burial place of one called Khilanwala, the "one of stakes," or Nangazwala, "the nine yard man." The man buried there is said to have been nine yards tall. At Mela time, milk is poured out on the ground as an offering, and the visitors drive stakes into the ground around the grave. Asked as to the meaning of the stakes, one Chuhra said that the spirit of the dead man often rode abroad on a horse, and that the pegs were for his convenience in tying the horse when he returned. Another gave an explanation more in keeping with usual Punjab ideas, namely, that the stakes were for a barrier to prevent the ghost from returning to haunt the village. A third explanation, which reflects a common Hindu tradition, is that a spirit cannot sit on the ground, but must perch on some elevated object. Chuhras of the villages near the grave always join with the Muhammedans in this mela of Naugazwala.

Similarly, at Gharyala, in Lahore district, is the grave of Sher Shah, a Muhammedan faqir. An annual mela is held in the month Chet, at which Chuhras join in the pouring out of milk as an offering.

Near Kasur is a grave over which is built a domed tomb, known as a Khangah, or Makbara. Here is buried "Pir Bol-ueshah" (or Buleshah), said to have died in the time of Alamgir, which would coincide with the maximum development of Kasur city on the banks of the Beas during the Moghal period. People go to this Khangah to light diwas on the twenty first day of every moon, and a mela is held during the Muharrim. A faqir has built himself a cave just below the tomb. Young men from the city, Muhammedan, and at different times, Chuhra, gather around the faqir and drink country liquour, especially almond wine. One Chuhra was observed using "bhang," or hemp, rolling it in his hands with gur, and then chewing it. The other men made a drink by mixing bhang, saunf (aniseed), kash kas (poppy seed), black pepper grains, and almonds. These were put into an earthen vessel, and ground with the grinding stick. The preparation of the drink amounted to a ceremony. Each took his turn at grinding, while the rest held the vessel with their feet. When the grinding was finished, water was added, and it was strained through a cloth. Each man drank about a pint of the resulting greenish liquid. With the first swallow several took a piece of opium. After drinking, they passed around a huqqa filled with charas, an intoxicating drug imported from Tibet, and inhaled its smoke.

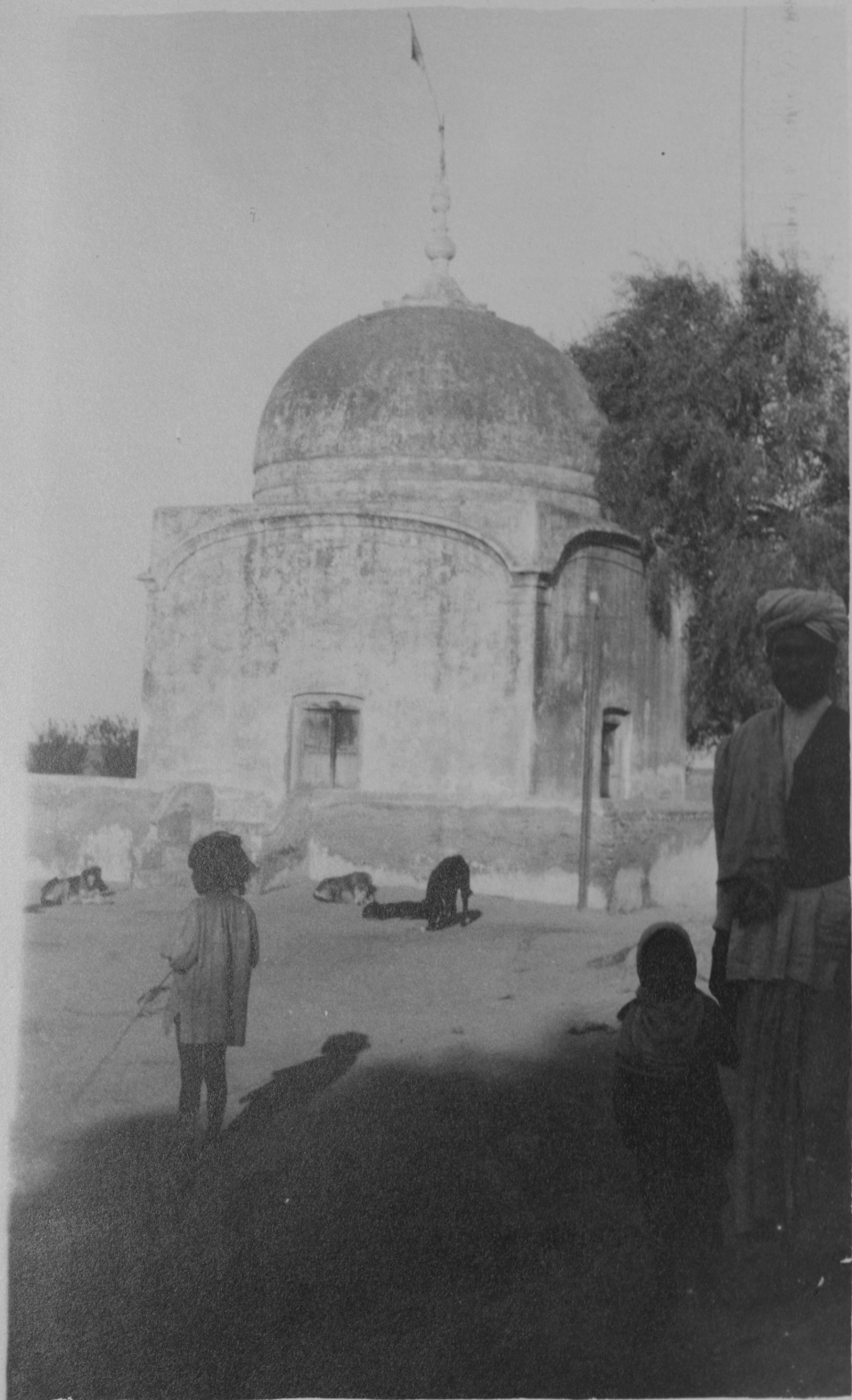
There are innumerable other Muhammedan shrines and melas where Chuhras like to join in the worship. A mela adds to its religious attractions other drawing forces, such as wrestling matches and exhibitions of various sorts. Some of them have a fame that extends for long distances, such as the mela at Malerkotla.



A Chuhra may not enter a Sikh temple, but at way-side shrines he may take part in the festivities and ceremonies. Near Pakka, Faridkot Native State, there is a "Smadh" or "Mari," a building erected at the grave, or where the body was burned, of one Ram Salu, a noted religious teacher. Near the main building is a smaller one, fronting on a platform where the Sikhs gather to sing "shabads" and hear the reading of the Granth Sahib. At the mela on the first day of Wasakh, (April 12) offerings of kara and patasis are given to the religious beggars. The significance of another part of the worship is not apparent; each worshipper carries some earth out of the basin of a pool, up to the top of a mound that has been erected. The pile of earth has grown in this way till it is as high as the dome of the building. The mela is a state affair, to which the Raja comes with a train of elephants, and followed by his minor officers. Besides the worship, there are wrestling matches, and stories in song by professional singers.

There are innumerable other shrines, Muhammedan, Hindu and Sikh, to which Chuhras go, and join as far as possible in the worship. In "Kim," Kipling mentions the "way-side shrines - sometimes Hindu, sometimes Mussalman- which the low caste of both creeds share with beautiful impartiality."

Of more or less local godlings and minor deities also, we find many that are held in reverence by the Chuhras, though generally considered as objects of Hindu worship.



Mata Devi Temple, Katluhi

One of the most common is Mata Devi, (also called Sitla or Chichak) the goddess of smallpox. Hardly a Chuhra community can be found which does not recognize her as one to be feared. Even in Muhammedan villages Mata Devi holds the imagination of the people, and Muhammedans may be observed making offerings before her images in times of epidemics. It is not a matter for surprise, therefore, that Chuhras make prayers at her shrines.

A semi annual worship of this goddess is appointed in the months Chetar and Katte. On the spring date one may see numbers of women coming out of their villages at daybreak with vessels of soaked pulse, called "pangur", and with sweetened bread and rice for offerings. Sometimes they scrape together little mounds of dust in the path and put handfuls of grain on them. In one village the women proceeded to a "jhand" tree, which stood in the edge of a pond, painted on its trunk a red spot with paint made of sandur and mustard oil. Then each worshipper deposited an offering and bowed before turning away. In this village the Chuhras described the manner in which they sometimes combat epidemics of smallpox. They procure a donkey, feed him some of the soaked grain, decorate him with colored cloth or flowers, and lead him out of the territory of their own village into that of another. Mata Dawi is supposed to be seated on the donkey, and is thus escorted, with honor so as not to hurt her feelings, out of their midst. Upon releasing the donkey they say to Mata, "Go, and never return to

our village." In case a donkey is not available, a black rooster may be substituted. This ceremony is plainly an adaptation of the scapegoat idea. Upon returning from the ceremonies described, a purification of the house and children is effected by the taking of a vessel of water and sprinkling both sides of the door and the children of the house with a handful of wheat heads.

In Katluhi, of Lahore district, there is a Mata Devi temple, which is visited regularly by large numbers of people. Chuhras, with others, from thirty or forty villages gather at a monthly worship, and at the big mela on April fourth. The image set within the temple is of white marble, carved in Jodhpur. Above the image, on the two sides, are figures of Hanuman, the monkey god, familiar to readers of the Ramayana, and of Bhairon, popularly conceived of as a personification of the field genius, though often confused with Bhairava, or Shiva, in northern India. Mai Mata is seated on a tiger. In front of her is a bell, to be rung by each worshipper, and on the table, a lamp, kept burning with offerings of ghi. Underneath the table is a large box, with a slot for reception of cash offerings. Goats and chickens are brought in great numbers, not destined to be burnt offerings, but to become the property of the priest, who auctions them off once a year. Lately a committee of the village, envious of the prosperity of the priest, has assumed the right to auction the gifts, and uses the money to keep up free rest houses and food kitchens for travelling worshippers.

The story of how this shrine was established is given as follows. A mirasi, or wandering singer, was travelling from the village Shainath. On the way he found himself accompanied by Mata Devi. She finally sat down under an old tree where she said she lived. Furthermore she told him that in his village she had afflicted a certain boy and girl with smallpox, but that if their mother would come to this place and make an offering of some parshad (a kind of halwa) she would let them go. The mirasi carried the news to the mother. She came with the offering and the children recovered. So she, and her relatives, who lived in Katluhi, began to make regular offerings there. Later a temple was built by the tree. It is worth noting that the mirasi stayed at the spot for some time and was the first one to profit by the offerings made.

Another noted temple of Mata Devi is at Kurali, near Morinda, in Ambala district. It is said that at the erection of this shrine a pig's head was buried underneath the foundation.

The stated times for making offerings may be neglected, but whenever smallpox breaks out, people in the vicinity quickly get something ready. Near Amritsar the proper offering was said to be a sacred cord called a "mauli," some kas kas, or poppy seed, a yard of new cloth, and four or five pice. These are tied into a bundle and placed at the foot of a tree. Here the worshipper bows and entreats Mata to accept the gift, and not to come near the



Mata Devi Image, Katluhi

house of the maker of the offering. She is at these times given names of honor, such as "Jag di Rani," Queen of the World, or "Maha Mai," the Great Mother. She is chief of the disease goddesses, and may be praised by the song:

"Maha Mai, Jagdian jotianwali,  
Jhulde jhandanwali, Chitian bajanwali."

Great Mother, the One of living flames,  
Of the Waving Flag, and of the White Hawk.

When small pox has broken out, it is said that the sick person should not be allowed to hear thunder, at least not before the eruption appears, or "his heart will tremble" and he will die. When thunder begins his family will sing a song to Mata, or make other noises to prevent his hearing. Mata devi is thought to hide in the house, preferably in a cool corner, until she is enticed out by gifts. That she is especially feared by the Chuhras is shown by the fact that behind the temple to Balmik in Ferozepur has been erected a special shrine to Mata, the only lesser deity recognized in this way.

Another minor deity worshipped by Chuhras throughout the southern half of the Punjab is Gugga Pir,\* master of snakes. This worship is another instance of the facility with which historical persons have been transformed into gods.

\*"Pir" is simply a Mohammedan title for priest or religious teacher. The original "Pir Panj," or "five Pirs," consisted of Muhammed, his daughter Fatima, Ali, husband of Fatima, and their two sons, Hassan and Hassain. Hence the Chuhras speak of "Lal Pir" for Lal Beg, "Gugga Pir", etc.

Gugga is called "Bagarwala," from Bagar, the place in Northern Rajputana where he ruled, about the eleventh or twelfth century. He was a Hindu, but is said to have become a Muhammedan in later life. His grave is in Bikaner State.

Many Hindus of the Eastern Punjab worship Gugga, as it is supposed to be within his power to protect the worshipper from snake bite. In some places buildings are erected as centers of worship. They are called by the name "mari" and have a tomb-like structure built up inside. Without is usually found the standard of Gugga, a bamboo pole surmounted by a tuft of peacock feathers. In Ludhiana district, three miles north of Khanna, there is a mari where an annual mela is held. Here along with Hindu worshippers are found many Chuhras. In the edge of Khanna itself is a small shrine where the worship is chiefly by Chuhras and other low castes. On Sept. 1st, 1921, a special day of worship was observed, where the Faqirs in charge were themselves Chuhras. Another "bhagat," sitting outside with his peacock feathers and a bundle of castigating irons, used in exorcism, was a Chamar, or leather worker, also of low social standing. Of the thousand people present in the afternoon most were low caste. Their gifts or offerings seemed to consist chiefly of coins and sweetmeats.

At the larger shrine mentioned above there is a pool which has a place in the customary ceremonies. Each



worshipper observed drank from the pool, then brought up a handful of mud from the bottom and added it to a heap on the bank. This, they said, was to please Gugga, who would allow no snake to enter their house during the ensuing year. The origin or exact significance of this act was hard to discover. One man, on being questioned, said "We dig out the mud after the manner of the serpent."

At the building itself, each worshipper made some offering, and was handed back a few small "patasis" (white, bubble like pieces of sugar candy) as a boon. Rows of beggars were sitting outside with their bowls, and into these bowls were dropped most of the "patasis" as the people passed out. When the crowd was thick around the door, and near approach difficult, a number of people tossed their offerings over the heads of the rest, and walked away.

The Punjabis say that no one but a true Bhagat of Gugga, (viz., into whom the Spirit of Gugga comes in exorcism) is supposed to be able to enter the great shrine at Bagar. If any false Bhagat attempts to ascend the stairs he is thrown back by Gugga. Inside the shrine is said to be a set of castigating irons weighing a maund and a quarter (100 lbs.) If the seeker is able to strike himself with this, the spirit of Gugga is certain to come into him. In Bagar, offerings of goats and sheep are made. Part is eaten and part is burned with spices before the shrine.

"The Legend of Guru Gugga," a play translated by Capt. R. C. Temple, F.R.G.S., has in it the story of

Gugga, as sung annually by travelling singers at Jagadhri. It tells of how Gugga performed his first miracle while still in his mother's womb, by bringing to life her two oxen which had died of snake bite. Later in the story Gugga himself assumes the form of a serpent upon occasion. From this legend has grown up the belief that he is the ruler of snakes. He controls all their movements, hence is to be appeased by offerings.

At Chand Baja, in Faridhot State, there was a small natural mound formed by the drifting sand that had gathered around a clump of shrubs. In this appeared snake or rat holes, and it came to be a regular place of worship, as being a natural dwelling place of Gugga. Near Mahawa, in Amritsar district, such a natural mound was enlarged by the addition of large clods of earth gathered from the surrounding fields. Here the people say they prepare an offering by browning "ata" on a tawa, mixing gur in water, and stirring the ata into it. Of the dough thus made they form small balls and place them around the mound for the snakes to eat. Then they bow their foreheads to the ground several times, "Taki sapp na lare," (In order that snakes shall not bite). One man seemed to be a bit skeptical, as he added, "Par phir bhi larde," (But they bite, nevertheless). Sometimes the worshippers pour out a mixture of milk and water on the ground, and say "Ai Gagga, Sanun sukh rakhin," (O Gugga, keep us in peace.). Any mound, especially if it appears to be inhabited by snakes, may become a center of veneration.

Gugga, or some other person with like attributes, is still thought to appear occasionally. In the spring of 1925 a story went the rounds that a snake charmer was giving an exhibition in Kapurthala, when he saw a man in the crowd who had eyes like a serpent, and recognized him to be a snake in human form. He followed the man to the jungle, where he assumed the form of a serpent and bit the charmer, whose dead body was later found by some herdsmen.

That there is a sort of personification of water that may be addressed as a deity, is natural in a territory where water is scarce. There seems to be no established name for the deity, though one man referred to water as "Bawa Jinda," "The Living Priest." The Chuhras have borrowed a song from the Sikhs, which they sing to Water when they dig a well, cross a stream, or bathe.

"Jal milia, Parmeshwar milia,  
Jal ka jama pahinia,  
Tan ki gayi bala."

"When you find water, you find God,  
Put on a robe of water, and  
Gone is the evil spirit of the body."

In villages of Faridkot State many of the Chuhra women make offerings to the "Bibrian," said to be spirits of seven virgin sisters who were buried at Saina, thirty miles east of Faridkot. One way of honoring them is to wear a silver ornament, called "chandi ki chaunki," bearing pictures of the Bibrian, hung as a pendant on the neck. In the village Nawa Qila, reasons given for wearing them,

or objects to be gained, were: to secure pregnancy, to cure sore eyes, and to get rid of pain in the knees and elbows.

Among the Chuhras are found traces or relics of totem worship, not expressed in offerings, but involving certain tabus, and appearing in the tribal names.

A totem is a class of objects to which a single tribe or clan has a special relation, resulting in a respectful and superstitious awe regarding these objects. The totem is often an animal or plant, though it may be almost any kind of object. Totemistic beliefs exist especially among the Dravidian tribes of central India, being less apparent in places where Brahman influence is predominant. The totems were originally regarded as the ancestors of the tribes which bore their names. Many of the old tribal names have been discarded in favor of local or territorial names, but some still persist.

Common tribal or "goth" names among the Chuhras near Ferozepur are: Kaharu, Uthwal, Gil, Burat, Shapari, Bau, Adhiwal, Siddu, Bhatti, Nar, Gharu, Ghor, Kaniare, Saliotre, Kusar, Sekho, Dairwal, Lidar, etc.

When a goth has a clearly recognized totem, the totem is tabu to members of the clan. Tabu seems to have two underlying ideas, first that the totem object must not be killed, used or abused, by members of the clan; secondly, that a clan member must not have marriage relations with totem companions of the other sex. Hence a single goth is always exogamous.

Miss McDonald, of Shahdara, has found one goth that holds the brick sacred, and won't sit on it, or put it to any of the less worthy uses. Another, called Bhura, won't spread the big brown Bhura (a coarse woolen blanket) on the ground to sit on, as is the common custom.

Most of the Chuhras of the Manjha, or high-lying land between the Beas and Ravi rivers, refuse to eat rabbit. When asked to explain why the rabbit was held sacred by more than one goth, they said that at one time some Chuhras killed the son of a Jat farmer, and hid the body under a basket. They were suspected, and a search of their premises made. When it was seen that the searchers were going to look under the basket, the Chuhras prayed to Balmik for safety, and when the basket was lifted, only a rabbit ran out. Since then they have protected the rabbit.

Dravidian tribes are said to have such totems as the tortoise, hyena, tiger, duck, and squirrel. Women of the Burat tribe do not stick cloves in the ring holes of the nose as others do, nor use cloves in their food. People of the Gill hold the tiger sacred, and the Nar tribe respects the wolf as being their tribal ancestor, while Hindus of the Gorakh Nath and Mashandar Nath won't eat fish. Janwar Rajputs in Oudh used to say that they are descended from the wolf, and that the wolves do not prey on their children.

Parts of the story of the Ramayana itself support the theory of descent of people from tribal animal ancestors (see 40th canto). So it is easily seen why the Chuhras would naturally hold to the totemistic traditions.

## CHAPTER III

### EXCLUSIVELY CHUHRA WORSHIP

#### A - Balmik

Having noted a number of factors in Chuhra worship which approximate Hindu and Muhammedan customs, we now come to the great worship of the Chuhras, which they count as exclusively their own. This is the worship Balmik. The names by which he is known vary. In Muhammedan circles he is likely to be called Bala Shah, or simply Bala. In Hindu villages, the form Balrik is often heard. But no Chuhras are found who do not claim allegiance to him, and it is his name which stands above all others in their songs and worship.

Balmik, or Valmik, is another of the Ramayana, a great epic poem of ancient Hindu literature. How he came to hold his place as center of the Chuhra worship is unexplained. But in their tradition and songs he is exalted as the first created being, and himself, in turn, the creator of material things.

The story of Balmik's origin, as found in the Chuhra songs, (collected and translated by Youngson) is as follows:

When there was as yet no heaven nor earth, no star nor angels, but only a waste of waters, God placed the "light of Bala" in an egg. This egg floated "shell like" on the water for thirty six ages. Bala ate nothing and drank

nothing but meditated on God and adored him. At the end of this period, by divine command, the egg burst into four pieces of brilliant hues, and Bala stepped forth.

This "Bala" is claimed by all Chuhras to be the same as Balmik. Explanation of the identity of the two is found in the songs. The Bala of the egg was to be incarnate ten times, and in one genealogy Balmik, author of the Ramayana, is given as the tenth and final incarnation.

Bala had a part in the creation of the world, proving, in competition, more powerful than other religious leaders. Chuhra tradition says that God put a pinch of dust in Muhammed's hand, then in Baba Nanak's hand. They each threw the dust onto the waters, but succeeded only in muddying them. Then Bala was given a pinch of dust. He called on the waters to witness that he had worshipped God thirty six ages, then he threw forth his dust, and behold the earth appeared. Hence he was exalted in the court of heaven.

It was during the first incarnation of Bala, in the person of Jhaumpra, that the Chuhra caste became a despised one, though parts of the story presuppose a humble status. Jhaumpra was the son of Brahma and Jastri. Jastri was a Chuhra herdsman's daughter, who as a child tended her father's herds, led them to water in the evenings, and then sat listening to her father with great reverence. Once they were visited by a great Hindu teacher of Dhanesar, an astrologer greatly loved by Rama. This holy man said that when he died his liver should not be burned with his body, but whoever would eat it should succeed him. Jastri heard this,



so when the great one died and his liver was removed, she slipped in and swallowed it. Then she ran away and lived six months in the jungle. Here her father found her and told her she was now a Brahmin and should go and live with the Brahmins. But she answered, "I am your daughter, you are my father, and your caste is loved by God," so she stayed in the wilderness and tended her father's cattle.

Later at the time of the great Kumb mela, she saw crowds going to bathe, and begged her father that she might be allowed to go. He consented, on condition that she go and bathe before daybreak. On her return, carrying some water of the holy stream, she met a Brahmin leper who was on his way to the river. She saw he was too near death to reach the river, so she threw into a stagnant pool the sacred water she was carrying. The leper plunged into the pool, and was cured. He then fell in love with her, and wanted to marry her, offering her riches. She replied that she was only a Chuhra and that she loved her simple dress and plain food. The Brahmin then went to her father, who told her to go with the Brahmin, as she was destined to become the mother of the Vedvas, a holy tribe who should live by receiving alms.

At this point in the story, the Brahmin is identified with Brahma, who, in Hindu theology, is the Supreme Soul, though here seems to be merely a high caste progenitor of certain tribes.

This Brahma and Jastri had four sons. One day a cow fell dead while grazing in the fields. It was necessary for someone to carry her away, but since these people were Brahmins they would be defiled by touching the dead body. The three elder brothers tried by flattery to induce the youngest, Jhaumpra, to carry her away, saying that he only was strong enough to accomplish the task. He demurred, fearing that they would refuse to associate with him afterwards. They, however, said it would make no difference, but that after four days of purification they would again receive him. So Jhaumpra threw the cow over his shoulder and cast her far away from the houses, whereupon the brothers told him he must sit apart for four ages. This, of course, amounted to permanent banishment from the family circle.

A nephew of Jhaumpra, named Kalak Das, took Jhaumpra's part, and even left his relatives to follow and live with him. Silavanti, wife of Kalak Das, began to mourn the loss of her home and people, but her unborn son, Alif Chela (the original disciple) spoke to her from within her womb, urging her to follow Jhaumpra as teacher, that Jhaumpra would be many more times incarnate, and that the faith of Kalak Das, the Chuhra, was a perfect faith. Whoever followed his teachings should be saved.

This marked the beginning of the new religion. Kalak Das prayed a prayer that God should accept the worship of the Kali Zat (black caste), and should make a visible appearance to prove his acceptance of the sacrifice. God

then agreed to accept their sacrifice if it was made every eighth day (viz. every Thursday). But Jhaumptra saw that his followers were too poor to sacrifice so often, and begged that this be not required. He offered to allow himself to be destroyed if God would save his followers. So the order was rescinded, and a yearly sacrifice established. Then Kalak Das founded a temple, in which Alif Chela became the first priest.

The ninth incarnation of Bala was in the person of Lal Beg, a camel driver, who lived, with his wife and two sons, in Kashmir. One of the Chuhra songs relates how he was visited and tested. God, together with nine genii and five angels, all having assumed the form of religious beggars, came to Lal Beg's house, asking for bread. In order to feed them he sold his household goods and bought bread. When the meal was ready, they pretended to be angry because there was no meat, and suggested that if there was no other way to procure it he should kill and cook his two sons, as a proof of his love to God.

Lal Beg proceeded to make the sacrifice, and even the mother of the boys was so anxious to please the guests that she shed no tears. But when they were again called to eat, they refused, saying that they couldn't enter the house of a murderer, that they had been only jesting about cooking the boys. "Now," said they, "raise your sons again, if you are a worshipper of God." So Lal Beg prayed a long prayer, reciting a list of his own good deeds. God answered that since Bala had taken his name during the ages when he had

lived in the "pearly shell," he would raise the sons. So they all began to eat, and the two boys appeared alive, standing by the door. Thus Lal Beg was established as an incarnation of Bala.

Certain low caste people, from Delhi and the Southern Punjab, call themselves the "Lal Begi," and consider themselves above the general run of Chuhras. The majority of Chuhras, however, make no distinction between Lal Beg and Balmik, and may use the names interchangeably. There are many different genealogies of Balmik. One of the songs gives twenty three generations from Jhaumpra to Balmik, while another gives forty two. According to Youngson, a genealogy heard at Maler Kotla, makes Balmik the seventh generation in a line starting with God. Another makes him ninth in a similar genealogy.

One of the chief methods of honoring a saint is to sing or repeat his genealogy. In the case of Balmik, this recitation is always ended with the call to the hearer, "Bolo, momano, wuli ek." An old man near Kasur gave a genealogy, which he called "Balwarik, Balmik da," in this way,

"Murg Sain, Balmik da,  
Balmik, Harditt da,  
Harditt, Gurditt da,  
Gurditt, Niridhar da,  
Naridhar, Narangkar da,  
Bolo Momano, iho ek."

Certain Chuhra singers or Ragi of Jhite, a place east of Amritsar, and of the goth Southra, were met in a village near the Sutlej river. They recited the "Balmiki

Kursinama" or "Nurnama" thus:

"Ek ankar, rag mar uwar, dhundhkar,  
Pauri ek, nam naranyan narangkar hai,  
Aur chati jogo rihon jalbimbi,  
Aur kaun tere pas.

Dharti gagan, natarion, na thamb na diya,  
Na tudh paun, na pani, na wan than thia;  
Tadon Baba Balrik parlo par horia.

Yan Sain, kar batain,  
Kull ka bera banne lain.

Sun mabuba, yar piyare,  
Uhi Allah tera jikr pukare.

Tum Sajhe kai lakh tare,  
Chand, Suraj, do tarle diwe,  
Wuhi jag rushanai;

Eko tera nam hai sahansi naim,  
Phir bolo, momano, wuhi ek."

A free translation would be something like  
this:

"Tune, Mar Uwar."

"When only God, and darkness void,  
One path one Name, Creator God,  
Then thirty six ages, by flood upborne,  
Who else was there, aside from thee!

No earth, nor heavens, nor stars, nor ground,  
No bounds, nor air, nor watered tree,  
Then Baba Balrik on the waters rode.

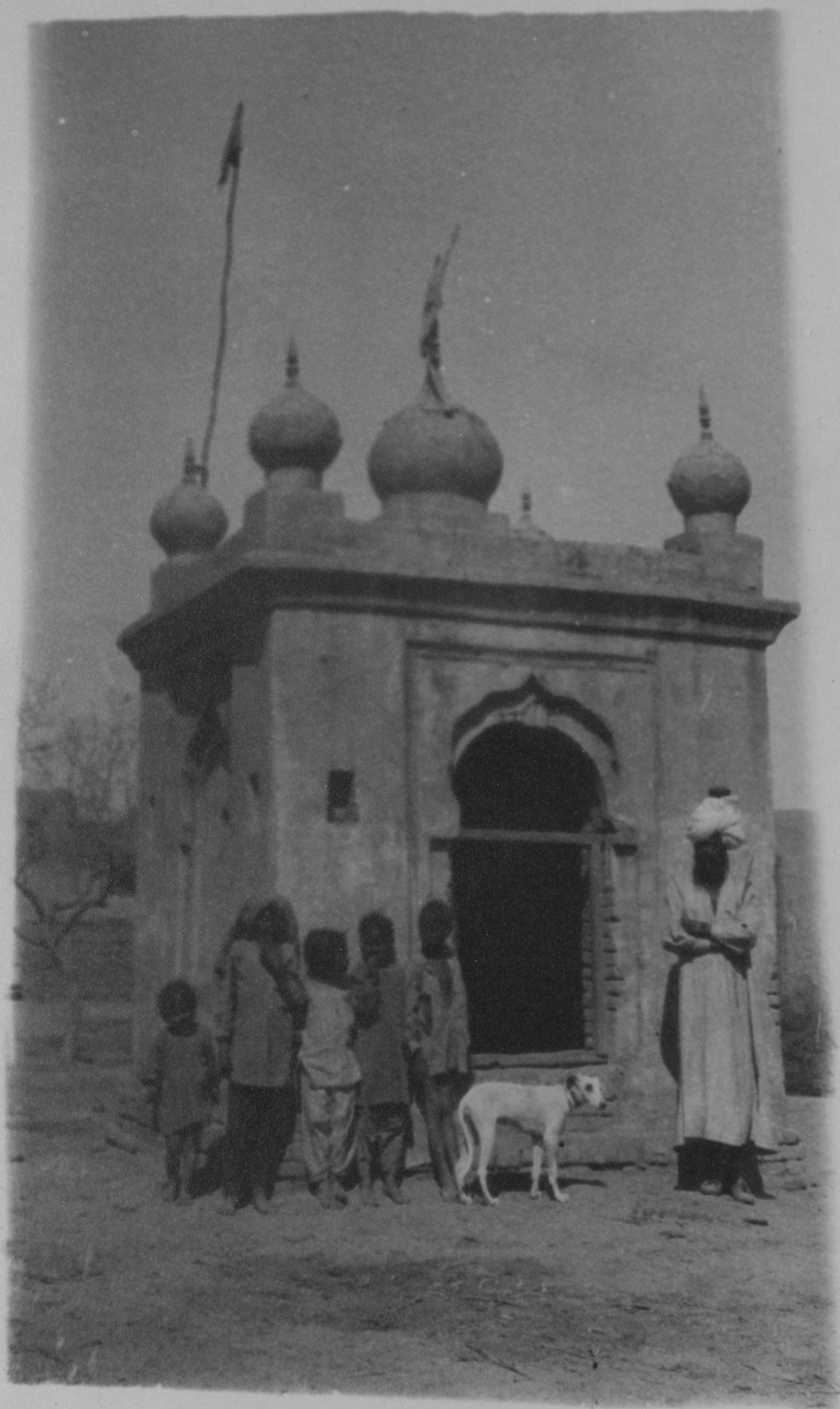
O Master, now the truth reveal,  
Bring our full barque to safety's port.

O hear me, friend, beloved one,  
This very God proclaimeth you.

Ten thousand stars by you were made,  
The moon and sun which light the world,  
And mark the daylight from the dark.

Thy name alone is myriad names,

Then speak, devout ones, 'This one alone.'"



Balmik Shrine, Kotkapura

## B - Places of Worship

There are comparatively few real buildings or temples dedicated to Balmik, probably because of the poverty of the Chuhra population. Of those that do exist, a chief one is in Ferozepur. It is a brick and lime building, covered with whitewash. On all sides is a deep, arched veranda. At the center stands a small rectangular room, in which is a "takhtposh," or wooden platform on legs. On this platform is spread a Bukhara rug, while two bookstands occupy a prominent place on the side nearest the main door. These stands hold large Gurmukhi copies of the Valmiki Ramayana, and the "Granth Sahib" of the Sikhs. The books are kept covered with an embroidered red cloth. Nearby stand small brass images of Hanuman and Krishna. There are several large sea-shells which can be blown at sunset, at which time also is beaten the "ningara," a sort of large kettle drum.

In front of the temple, at the right side of the entrance, stands a red flag, and over the doorway itself is a sign, "Balmiki Samajh Mandir." The little shrine to Mata Devi, mentioned before, is just back of the temple.

Underneath a temple or shrine of any kind, at the time it is built, there is usually some object buried. It may be a chicken, a copper or silver knife, or a cocoanut. More often when the lamb or kid which is to furnish the dedication feast is killed, its skin, head, and feet, or the

joints of its legs, are buried. When the shrine in Rupana was built, the people buried a dish of seeds. The Chuhras of some villages say they buried nothing under their shrine, which may be true in certain cases.

In Kotkapura the Chuhras dug a community well, and at the same time founded a shrine, dedicating both with sacrifices, with the thought that Balmik should become the special guardian of the well. The building is small, with a domed roof. For the most part it is neglected, but once a year special worship is conducted by a Bhagat, and offerings of "ghi," grain, and "churma" are made.

The ordinary type of shrine seen in the small villages is made of sun dried brick, plastered over in the same manner as are their houses. It is called a "than," (from Sanscrit "isthan" or "place") or "thara." This invariably faces the east, and has on it one or more places for reception of the "dewas," small earthenware lamps. These niches are usually in odd numbers, one, three, five, nine, etc. The "than" ordinarily consists of a sort of platform, with the "duakha" or cluster of niches for lamps, at the west edge. Nearby is planted a pole on which is the red flag, usually presented as a gift by some worshipper.

A single Chuhra community centers about one "than." If there are two separate groups, as is often the case, each group has its own "than." Members of the community may come to the shrine at any time to make offerings and ask for special favors. Observation indicates that the majority of the occasional worshippers are women, while the men

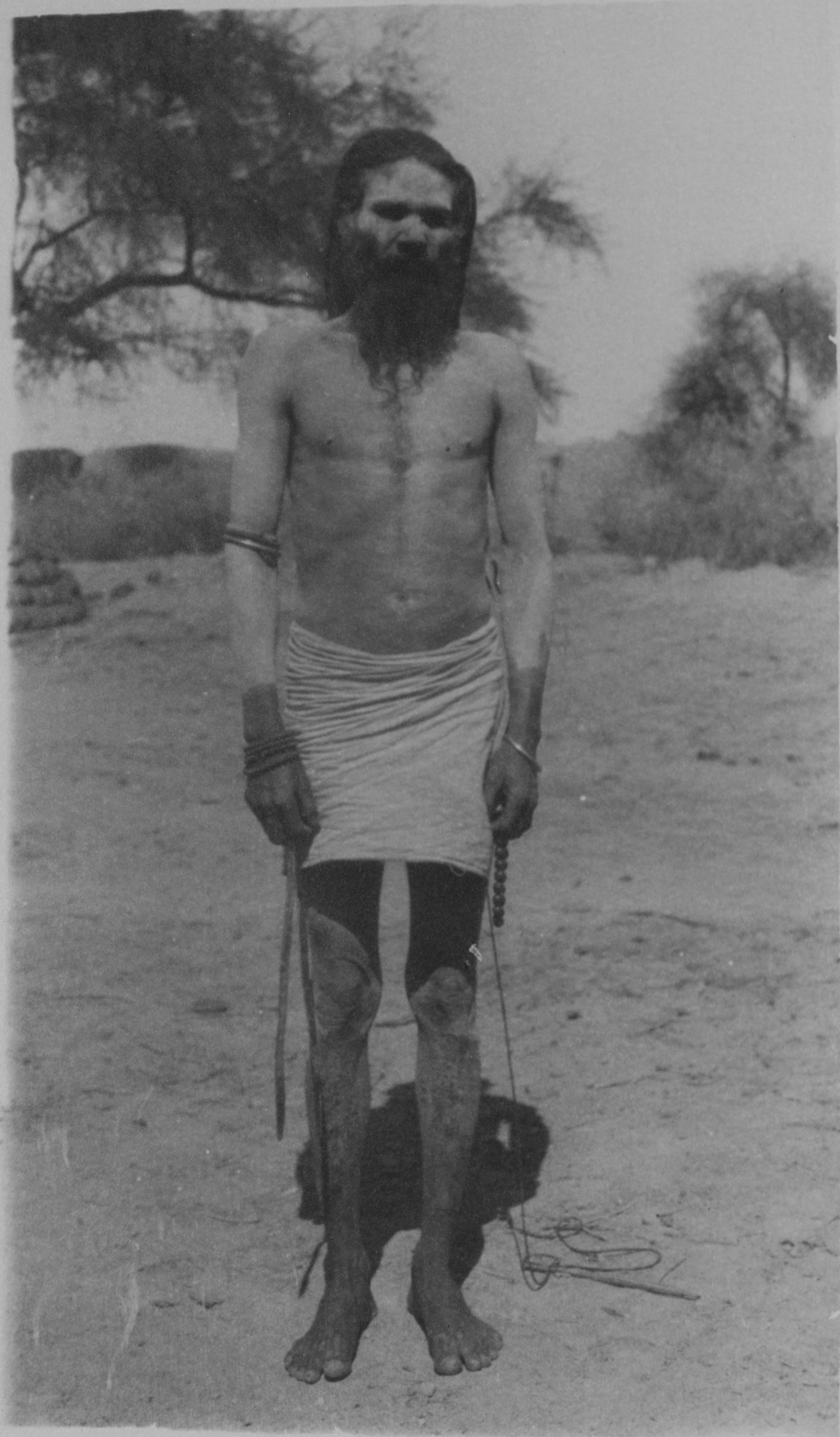




Ordinary Village Shrine

ordinarily come only at the appointed times of sacrifice. In some villages, even where there is no professional priest, one man is appointed who conducts regular worship at stated times, often at intervals of a week, (Thursdays.) At this time the people come with gifts, a fire is lighted, and on its glowing coals melted "ghi" mixed with camphor or other fragrant gum, is poured, a drop at a time. The priest recites the kursinama, all the congregation bows, and says "There is this one only." At this time they may make any requests they wish.

If there is a faqir or bhagat, he usually gets any articles offered, though at the yearly worship, all partake of the "churma," and portions are thrown to the crows and dogs. If singers are present they are called upon to sing songs of Bala, and are given gifts of food and money.



Chuhra Faqir

## C - Priests

Of the Chuhra priestly class, there are several orders of sadhus, given as follows by Mr. Youngson,

1. Nangeshahiya, who goes naked for twelve years, and who plait~~s~~ his long hair with the milk of the banyan tree,
2. Bairagi, who carries a bairagan to sit on,
3. Nanshahiya, who leaves his hair loose and wears a string of beads,
4. Yatim Shahiya, much like the Nanshahiya.

A sadhu may be permanently attached to a shrine, either as a priest of a temple or leader of worship in a single village group. In either case, he has great influence in the community, as its seer and advisor. But more often the lure of the road turns him into a roving religious teacher. In his travels he gradually develops a regular clientele, which is certain to welcome him on each returning trip with gifts and food. It is a common practice for families living themselves on the verge of starvation to save up sufficient to furnish their sadhu with milk and ghi.

When a priest or sadhu has gained an established standing in some community, he is given the title of Bawa, as a sign of respect. He then becomes the "guru", or teacher, of someone else who is called his "chela," and who will eventually succeed him. Each sadhu, young or old, will tell the name of his own guru. At the Ferozepur shrine the priest gave the names of the gurus for four generations back.

When an old Bawa, connected with any shrine, chooses his chela, he calls a meeting of sadhus for the initiation ceremony. A feast is prepared, at which is served "parshad,"

a kind of "halwa" made of butter, wheat kernals, raisins and cocoanut. The old man grinds up some "patasis" with ashes from the sacrificial fire, mixes them with water in a bowl, and gives it to the chela to drink. He instructs the boy as to his duties, then cuts his hair off and plasters his head with wet ashes and cow dung. This sort of application fades the hair to a yellowish brown color, and as it grows long use of the comb is avoided so that the hair will form the "jarawan" or "jaten," the matted locks characteristic of sadhus.

The chela, from the time of his initiation, becomes the disciple and personal servant of his guru. He will serve him as long as he lives, and at the guru's death, will take his place. (See the story of Kim).

Many sadhus use the marks of their order simply as a means of livelihood, but the real Bawa can usually read or recite the sacred writings, and is the spiritual teacher of his followers. The priest at Ferozepur reads from the Ramayana each evening to those who come to hear. He has a special worship once a week, curiously enough in this case on Sunday, from twelve to three. This is due to the fact that Ferozepur is a military station, and Sunday noon is the time that those who are servants are free from work.

Sarotha Nath, now a Christian of Kotkapura, was chela and sadhu for twenty two years. He claims to have committed to memory the whole of the Ramayana, which he recited to the Chuhras as he travelled over the country.

Certain special priests, called "Siyanis," "the knowing ones," or "Bhagats," "worshippers," practice exorcism, as described later.

Most sadhus subject themselves to austerities of certain kinds, in order to acquire virtue or power. They are supposed to sleep on the ground with no cover but a blanket, even in cold weather. They eat whatever people give them, and keep their body rubbed with dry ashes. Those desiring to have special merit inflict themselves in more rigorous ways, such as letting cold water drip on their heads in winter, or sitting in the midst of fires through the heat of the day in summer.

One Chuhra, who was a servant of a Christian official in Jullundur, hung himself by his feet in a tree on a December night. He was found unconscious in the morning, and was cut down and revived with great difficulty by his employer. After recovery of his senses, he said, "Why did you cut me down, I was practicing 'Bhagati.'"

Most sadhus use drugs of different kinds such as opium, hemp, myrrh, etc., as an aid in attaining proper spiritual states. This is especially true of those who practice exorcism. When there is a gathering of sadhus in Ferozepur at the Balmiki Samajh Mandir, they smoke "bhang da sulfa," a hemp extract, until they reach a state of supor. In this state, they say, all bodily desires disappear, and so all sin is avoided. This is considered to be the best condition in which to meditate and pray, and the one state of complete happiness.

It is not true that all faqirs, priests, and sadhus, have served an apprenticeship, in training for their office. Some attain the position through showing signs of extraordinary wisdom or devotion. And especially, everyone who can control spirits is called a priest. There is a common saying, "Jo hilta hai, so bhagat hai," (whoever "shakes" is a priest.)



Sarotha Nath, ex-Chuhra Priest



## D - Sacred Times and Seasons

The worship of Balmik does not include the observance of many special or sacred times. There is nothing to compare with the long list of Hindu holidays, nor anything resembling the spring fast of the Mohammedans. The Chuhras do, however, generally observe the yearly feast, which follows completion of the grain harvest. In some places this feast is made to coincide in date with some special Hindu celebration. An annual mela and feast is held at the Ferozepur temple, on the fifth day of Basanth, or Spring.

On the occasion of the yearly feast, lighted lamps are set in the niches of the shrine, a "pilau" of rice, ghi, and gur, is prepared and placed upon the "than." Or if a goat is to be cooked it is placed on the platform, where its head and the four joints of its legs are washed. Then Balmik is called upon to receive it as a sacrifice, and it is killed. When the meal is ready, a fire of wood coals, or of dried dung-cakes is kept burning. On this the priest drops oil or ghi, and says, "O Bala, we are worshipping you, come near and eat." When the fire flares up from the oil, the worshippers exclaim, "He has come, he has come." Then those gathered together are fed.

Such a feast is called a "Wandara," or "Distribution" so named from the fact that the food is divided and eaten by all those present. This is definitely a sacrificial

feast, in which the worshipper and worshipped partake together, and it signifies a situation of community and sympathy.

Apart from the annual feast, worship at many shrines is limited simply to individual offerings and prayers, except when sickness or an epidemic arouses the people, and leads them to hold a public meeting and sacrifice. A special, previously appointed worship, to which numbers of people may come, is sometimes called a "jag."

## E - Offerings

Some of the usual offerings made at village shrines of Balmik have already been mentioned. Among the most common is grain, such as gram, wheat or barley. This may be placed on the "than" in its dry state, or may be soaked, or cooked with "gur." In any case it is left to be eaten by the birds.

Cooked foods, like "churman", made of "ata" and "gur," and cooked in deep grease, or boiled rice or pulse, are sometimes used as gifts. Of the food to be served at the "Wandara," some is placed on the shrine, and a portion set aside for the dogs and crows.

Offerings of money, cloth, or sweetmeats, are common at the larger shrines, where the priest is supported by the gifts of the visitors.

But most characteristic of all, and practically universal, is the custom of lighting the "diwa," or small earthenware lamp. In it is burned either mustard oil or "ghi." Upon the sacrificial fire of a "jag," or special worship, the priest may burn luban, badam, gandaras, laung, or lachian, (incense, almond, \_\_\_\_\_, clove, or cardamom seeds), mixed with the oil and dropped on the coals. A vessel of water, or water poured onto the altar, is also a suitable offering.

## F - Religious Songs

For the most part the religious songs of the Chuhras have not been written, but the Rev. J. W. Youngson, D.D., of Sialkot, gathered and translated, with great care and patience, a large number of those used in his immediate vicinity. In the collection are some wedding and burial songs, but of more interest to this study are the songs telling of Balmik, and others of religious import.

While these songs, as collected, represent what was found among the singers of Sialkot, in Ferozepur the songs used seem to have the same subject matter, though they may vary in their wording. Some of these are songs of worship, but the greater part are narrative.

There are tribes of professional singers, known in Muhammedan districts as "Mirasi," and elsewhere simply as "Ragi." They travel from place to place, singing at nights for the Chuhras of the villages, and being paid by gifts of food and money. Especially they try to be present at weddings and religious festivals, on which occasions their services are greatly in demand.

The Ramayana, of which, more will be said later, may be sung by the Ragi, or recited by Sadhus, but it is not a religious work. It is simply an epic poem, and while some of the characters portrayed have become deities in Hinduism, the story itself is not religious in nature, nor does it give any inkling of the religious thought of the Chuhras. The

singers of the religious songs, on the other hand, form part of the essential community connected with any temple or major shrine, and it is through their songs that the chief religious ideas are spread among the people.

Most of the facts of Balmik's life as set forth in this paper are taken from the narratives of these songs. A survey of the songs brings out also what we might call the data of Chuhra theology. Some of the commonly accepted ideas are as follows:

There is one supreme God, sometimes identified withh Rama, but usually called "Alif Allah," the "Original God," who created the universe. He, himself, is the Uncreated, having no father nor mother, no brother nor sister. He is to be worshipped by all men. There is, in the list of songs, a call to worship, beautifully translated into verse by Youngson, which begins:

"O worship him at day dawn,  
Who made the herbs and flowers,  
Who waters field and greenwood  
With soft refreshing showers."

The first created spirit was Bala, (Balmik). He was formed before the heavens and earth, when there were no spirits, nor angels, nor men. He is called "first and last, unseen and seen." He is exalted and holy, and has no equal. "He alone is true." He is mediator between man and God, "Our cry is to thee, thy cry reaches the presence of God." Under the direction of God, Bala became the creator of the world, as already related in connection with the story of Balmik. This is stated to have occurred "when as yet there was no Granth nor Koran."

Inconsistent with the above is the story of the formation of the first man out of clay, and of the creator's difficulty in persuading a spirit to enter the unpromising body.

God takes account of the deeds of "sense and sight." Sin is a reality, calling for future punishment.

The soul at death takes its flight to God, but is also said to be a homeless wanderer, till a general resurrection reunites families.

Sacrifice is a necessary part of worship.

There are angels and evil spirits.

If any follower of Bala Shah, (a Shahi) shall repeat the Muhammedan creed, he is to be counted an unbeliever; if Baba Nanak's, he is to be cast off. But all that profess the creed of Bala shall go straight to heaven (dargahe).

## G - The Ramayana

The Chuhra religion presents the paradox of basing its religious practices on legends concerning the author of the Ramayana, and of venerating the book itself, yet of incorporating almost none of the Ramayanic characters or events in its religious traditions or folklore. Since, however, the Ramayana is part of the equipment of their temples, and is sometimes read or recited by priests, it cannot be ignored in any summary of the Chuhra's religion.

The Ramayana is one of the two great epic poems of Hinduism, composed possibly three or four hundred years B.C. by Balmik or Valmiki. It is a remarkable story of heroic men, and of a faithful, loving woman. Its ideals are high, and its deeply emotional character has built it into the heart of India in a way true, perhaps, of no other national literature.

There have been five or six English translations. One, more or less condensed, by R. C. Dutt, is found in the Everyman's Library series. This translation has finely worded descriptions and a beautiful metre. In the complete editions the stories of Rama's impossible feats, accomplished in his boyhood, are strung out so as to become tiresome to a western reader. Dutt has wisely omitted from his popular edition some of these, as well as certain parts which depict gods having very undesirable traits.

The story deals with events in India about a thousand years B.C., probably in the country east of the Ganges, now called Oudh.

Janak, king of Videha, offered the hand of his beautiful daughter, Sita,\* to any youth who could bend his great bow, a weapon so large that it was carried on an eight wheeled iron chariot. Rama, eldest son of Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya, went to Videha and not only bent and strung the bow, but drew the cord until the bow snapped in two. As a result Rama was married with great pomp to the princess, and also his three brothers were given three of Sita's sisters as wives.

Old King Dasaratha greatly admired his son Rama, and made preparations, which were welcomed by the people, to set him on the throne. But a serving maid of Kaikeyi, one of the queens, stirred her mistress to jealousy that Rama should get the throne rather than her own son, Bharat. This queen went into the mourner's chamber, and remained there weeping until the king, not knowing what was the matter, offered to give her anything she should ask. She demanded that Rama be banished and Bharat given the crown. Both the king and people were filled with anger and remorse, but the promise given could not be recalled.

Rama himself was resigned, and calmly prepared to depart. He urged Sita to remain and serve the new king,

\*The word "Sita" means furrow. The name was established from the fact that she appeared in a furrow when the king was ploughing a field. Sita is hence the "Goddess of the Furrow," and is invoked for good crops.



but she declared that she would be banished with him. One of the other brothers, Lakhshman, also insisted on going. So they slipped away in the night, and the old king never saw his son again.

Bharat, upon discovering what had occurred, refused the crown, and tried vainly to bring about the return of Rama. Rama met him in the jungle, but refused to return, and instructed Bharat as to the rule. Bharat then returned to rule, but he kept Rama's shoes on the throne, as a sign of Rama's right of occupancy.

There follows a long story of the wanderings of the exiles, of a Rakhsha princess who tries to capture Rama and to slay Sita, but is punished by Lakhshman. By deceit, Sita is beguiled into the forest, and carried off to Ceylon by Rawan, brother of the Rakhsha. Rama is aided in his search for her by an exiled king, and by Hanuman, ruler of the monkeys. Hanuman discovers the place where Sita is kept captive, and a war ensues, in which Rawan is killed and Sita captured.

After Sita's release, Rama had doubts regarding her fidelity, but she proved her innocence by ordeal, walking unhurt through a burning funeral pyre.

Rama and Sita then returned to Ayodhya, where he was welcomed by both Bharat and the people, and since the time of his exile had been fulfilled, he was made king.

Later additions to the story, made by other writers, spoil its effect, picturing continued suspicion on the part of Rama, and banishment of Sita. She then lived in the

jungle with her twin sons, Loh and Kusa. The sons became pupils of Valmiki, a hermit teacher and saint, who taught them to recite the story of Rama's life. In later years, when the boys sang the story of Rama at court, they were recognized by Rama as his sons.

Echoes of Ramayana are heard everywhere in India. Chuhras, in common with Hindus, consider Rama to be a great hero, and places traditionally connected with his wanderings are held sacred. Almost any song of virtues, or of instruction to women will mention Sita as the perfect example of fidelity and other womanly virtues.

So while the Chuhras do not draw their objects of worship from the Ramayana, they, without doubt, have established some of their ideals in the light of its story.

## CHAPTER IV

### SPIRITS AND DEMONS DEMON POSSESSION AND EXORCISM CHARMS AND OMENS

No matter is more real, or of greater concern to the Chuhra than the presence of spirits. It is by their agency that all unfamiliar phenomena occur, and they control events in the face of which man is helpless.

The uneducated outcast has no feeling of intellectual security, such as characterizes more developed types of people, who feel that, in most respects at least, natural cause and law operate in the universe. He is surrounded by objects and happenings which are controlled by mystic forces. He sees events, but does not necessarily look for causal connection with anything else. From this situation arise his fears. A fever epidemic, the caving in of his well, or the death of even an old man, is the result of some occult power, not of natural causes. His first thought in time of calamity is, "Whom have we offended," or "What spirit may be angry with us?"

A few of these spirits are widely known godlings, such as Mata Devi or Gugga. Others are super-human witches, like the "Jigar Khor," or Liver Eater, or "Kala-Ratri," the One of Black Night, who eats human flesh, can turn the dead into ghosts, set fire to water, and turn stone to wax.

But by far the greater number of spirits are conceived to be of local origin and significance. Often they are ghosts of persons, who, for some special reason, have been

conspicuous in life, like the "Naugazwala" of Chand Baja, or, a man who was an atheist may be feared as likely to have become a "Rakhshasa." Even a living man is sometimes given this name because supposedly under the sway of devils. Anyone who died an untimely or violent death, killed by wild animals, murdered, executed as a criminal, or a suicide, may be expected to be restless after death. Likewise a robber, a deformed or one eyed man, or an insane person is likely to reappear as a ghost after death.

A churail, or chudel, is a fearful female ghost with a hideous face, streaming hair, and her feet turned backwards. A kachil is a woman who died in childbirth, or one who was a widow from childhood, or any virgin who died with her desires unsatisfied, cheated of her natural rights. The tendency of dead virgins to become active spirits is illustrated in the case of the Bibrian, mentioned in connection with the minor objects of worship. Other names for ghosts are Bhut, Pret, Dait, Dain, and Pisacha.

When anyone dies, especially if he is considered as likely to become a ghost, great care is taken at the time of burial to insure against his return. This may take the form of propitiatory offerings and prayers. For instance, food is sometimes offered to the dead person. On the bed on which the corpse is being carried out is set down in the road, and a full "ghara" broken, so that the water may run out and quench the thirst of the dead one. "We have fed you," they say, "and given you drink, so be kind and never

return to your house." This breaking of a "ghara" of water also has a general significance of separation, as indicated by use of a similar ceremony when a Hindu is expelled from his caste. Often the path taken by the burial party from the house to the grave is crooked, in order that the spirit may be unable to find its way back. Having arrived at the place of burial sometimes a barrier of stakes is put round the grave to keep the spirit in. Special care will be taken if the dead person was a pregnant woman. Cases have been reported where the body was buried face downward to prevent any possible emergence of the spirit. It is said that fear of low caste ghosts has led high caste people of some places to demand such a burial.

Certain spirits are supposed to occupy the houses in which they formerly lived. They like cool damp places, and may be found behind the water jars in the corner. Others live in trees, especially along canals or streams. Many a Chuhra is afraid to go alone at night on a canal bank, or in an uncultivated spot occupied by scrub trees and irregular ground or mounds. An evil spirit may attach itself to a well, a roof, a vessel, or an animal or field. If the roof falls, it is proof that it was inhabited by a malignant being. Since an evil spirit can't rest on the ground, sometimes a dying man will be laid on the ground, and it is said that sometimes a bride and groom will sleep on the ground to escape any evil influence at the beginning of their married life.

In addition to the spirits that occupy trees, mounds, or houses, there are others that enter human beings.

In fact, people may be possessed by almost any spirit, whether simply the ghost of someone who has died, or one of the more established god-spirits.

Most common of all is the troubling of some person by the ghost of a deceased relative or neighbor. This may result in some sickness, or may be evidenced simply in mental uneasiness and fear. When one is bothered by a "bhut," he calls some bhagat who is able to control spirits, and who can drive, or entice, it out.

One fact to be noticed is that when called upon to exorcise a spirit, the bhagat himself develops an ecstatic state, (khel), at which time he is supposed to be the abode of a spirit. In other words, it requires the power of a spirit to cast out a spirit. Sometimes it is thought that the identical spirit that has been attacking a patient has entered the bhagat, and the bhagat's words are the words of the spirit. In this case the bystanders ask questions to find the cause of the enmity toward the sick one. "Who are you?" they ask. "I am so and so" is the answer. "What do you want, or why are you angry?" "My grave has not been sufficiently honored," or "My family has been wronged" etc. "What shall we do?" The instructions in answer to this may be to light a diwa at the grave, or make certain offerings, but part of it is almost certain to be payment of a sum of money to the bhagat! While in his ecstacy the priest may mumble words, move his hands over the afflicted person, or place ashes on the head.

There is a recognized profession of exorcists, and they are called more often in times of illness than the "hakim" or doctor. A strange fact is that Chuhra exorcists are sometimes called to minister to even the high caste.

Several means may be used to induce the hypnotic state necessary for exorcism. One is by use of drugs. Most bhagats on these occasions use opium, hemp, myrrh, etc., as aids to spirit possession, just as was explained regarding the attainment of high spiritual states in worship. Another effective means is violent movement in dancing, swaying, or jerking of the head. To these may be added loud beating of drums, or self flagellation.

At the time of melas and fairs, it is common for some "gyani" or priest, to "play," and assume the office of soothsayer, or a healer of disease. A good example of this occurred at a mela of Gugga in Ludhiana district in 1921. When the crowd of worshippers was at its height, suddenly a bhagat rushed from the "mari" and seized a bunch of iron rods about a foot long, to each of which was attached a short chain, ending in a sharp pointed iron spike. He was naked to the waist, and his long hair was loose and flying. With the group of chains he began to beat himself on the bare back, over his left shoulder, while six or eight drummers beat loud and rhythmically on their drums. He continued the flagellation till his back began to bleed and he was panting for breath. Then he dropped the irons and began to shake his head violently as he staggered back and forth.

The impression of all this on the onlookers was tremendous. They crowded near on all sides. Some bowed and repeated prayers, others came near enough to kneel and touch his knees, asking for the cure of some member of the family, or for prophecy as to weather and the coming crop. To some he gave bits of red wool string which he took from his mouth, to others small seeds to be carried away and used as medicine. Inquiry showed that he was supposed to be possessed by Gugga, and had particular power of curing snakebite.

Closely related to propitiatory worship of spirits and occult powers is fear of the "evil eye" (bad nazar). Belief in this baneful influence has been current in a great many countries. We have something like it in the classic Greek example of the Gorgon Medusa, who could turn anyone to stone with a look, while fear of evil eyes exists today among the Celtic peoples of Britain, and in all Southern Europe and Asia.

It is the feeling that certain persons have the ability, by power of the eye, to cast an evil spell upon others. Use of this power may arise from general dislike, but usually seems to operate because of envy. The caster of the evil eye is likely to be someone particularly hideous, or having a physical deformity, and therefore envious of others who are beautiful or fortunate. Thus, a one-eyed man is likely to be jealous of him with two eyes, and to view him with the eye of envy. A man who owns no cow may look at the cow of another with such malice and covetousness as to cause her milk to dry up, or her calf to become lean and



scraggly.

The one casting the evil eye may even be a non-human being. A "kachil" or "churail" may be envious of the woman with a fat, beautiful baby. The Chuhras are suspicious of anyone pretending to admire someone else's child. It is considered bad form ever to say to the mother, "How well your child looks," or to make any mention of its beauty. It is a common thing for one woman on seeing the baby of another, to say, "Isn't the poor thing scrawny and ugly, do you think it can live?" In this way she will not arouse envy in anyone. It is better to praise not even a meal, for fear the evil eye of some hungry one will be aroused and give you indigestion.

Children are often given deprecatory names to ward off possible evil. For example, we find such names as Rura, "trash heap," and Ghasita, "dragged." Sometimes the real name is kept a secret and another used, for to let one who casts the evil eye know your name gives him power over you. A man does not like to speak of his own name and if asked what it is, will ask a neighbor to tell it.

A boy may have his ears and nose pierced to make him look like a girl and so avoid the evil eye. In the village Dal, near the Bari Doab Canal, a Chuhras boy was observed with large nose rings. His parents explained that his older brothers had all died in infancy, because of some evil influence. So this boy was made to resemble a girl, in order to let him escape the fate of the others.

Bright or sparkling ornaments may divert the :

attention of the evil eye from the wearer, and so provide some protection. Kauri shells worn on the body will break if the evil glance falls on them, but the wearer is saved. Other means of protection are uses of beads, iron ornaments, certain colors such as black and yellow, salt, incense, etc. The blackening of the eyes of babies, and tatoo marks or colored nails on women are useful in this matter. When a new house is built, sign of a hand, made with black from the "tawa" is often applied at the side of the door, as a protection against the evil eye. Since light is necessary for seeing, the evil eye doesn't function at night. This adds an element of safety to Chuhra weddings, which, like all Oriental weddings, take place at night.

As is true of the Indian people generally, Chuh-ras have great faith in charms, and use many different kinds. Hardly a woman, child, or even man, can be found without at least one charm attached to his person.

Chuh-ras will tell you that charms originated with Rama himself. His younger brother, Lakhshman, when only twelve years of age, had killed a Rakhshi, and it was feared that she would return to harm the child. So Rama cut off Lakhshman's hair, and having made of it a "mantra" by blowing his breath on it and speaking God's name, he tied it on with a "tiragi" as a protection.

The simplest kind of charm is the word-charm. Just as the Hindu will say "Om, Om," to insure good luck or safety, so the Chuhra will repeat "Rabb, Rabb," or "Ram

Ram" in times which require special protection or precaution. The beginning of a new task is made more auspicious if the magic expression is used, and a yawn or sneeze, having opened the body to entrance of evil spirits, needs to be followed immediately by speaking the name of God. Where the Chuhra community is under Muhammedan influence the expression "Bismillah" is also heard.

The most common charm is some significant article, bound onto the body. Muhammedans, though distinctly non-animistic, use such charms in combatting illness or danger. To place a small bit of the Koran in a metal or leather case, and to use it as a magic piece, is declared by the Maulvis to be "haqq" (right, or truth). Chuhras will accept charms from Hindu or Muhammedan priests, as well as from their own sadhu. If asked for a charm the Maulvi is likely to write a prayer or quotation on paper, fold it tightly and instruct the applicant to place it inside some receptacle. Another common charm is a dark colored woolen string in which knots are tied, and for which the Maulvi charges eight annas or a rupee. This is tied on any affected arm or leg, and is especially good for burns.

In Doda, Ferozepur district, a man was bitten on the arm by a donkey. For treatment of the wound the local Chuhra priest took a little ashes from his fire, blew upon it, (phunk maria), recited a few magic words, and bound the ashes into a small leather wallet, which he tied onto the

arm. A similar charm was used in Dhippanwala to prevent infection from the bite of a mad dog. But most common of all charms is the "tawiz" or "tawit", a small rectangular locket of copper or silver, in which may be placed some writing, knotted thread, nim leaves, or ashes.

The kauri shell, used as a coin of small denomination, may serve as a charm against other dangers, as well as the evil eye. Whole necklaces of them are worn by girls and women. Articles of jewelry, worn in the nose, ears, etc. help to keep spirits from entering through these channels, for all spirits dislike metals of any kind. Though a child may wear no clothing, the mother almost invariably keeps the "taga" on him, a string about his waist which is effective as a charm. Salt is an antidote for spirits, and a little is sometimes put into a child's mouth after he drinks milk, for spirits like the taste of milk and may enter the child to get it. Other charms are beads, coins, fire, incense, seeds, animal claws or teeth, or any one of the five products of the cow, held sacred by the Hindu, viz., milk, curds, butter, urine and dung. The hand mark on the wall was mentioned in connection with the evil eye, and making of a noise in the case of Mata Devi.

It will be observed that almost all use of charms is defensive. One exception would be the use of the Bibrian "chaunki" to secure conception.

A great many Chuhra medicines are really charms, rather than articles having any medicinal value. Any strange

or unusual substance is likely to be used. Hakims and dispensers of medicine handle such objects as deer's horn, peacock's foot, dried lizard or scorpion, boiled robin, pulverized crocodiles skin, etc. Travellers and hunters will be asked for bear's fat, alligator's bile, gunpowder, gasoline, and lubricating oil.

Attention to omens, especially evil ones, (shakk karna, shugun lena) is a common thing among the Chuhras.

For instance if one sneezes (chinkna) on a journey he should turn back, for he is likely to meet with misfortune on the road. Or if anyone recalls him after he has left the house, or calls after him for any reason, he will be angry and demand to know why he was not spoken to before he started. Before setting out again, he must sit down in order to have a completely new start.

A disastrous journey is indicated if a dog, seen on the way, jerks his head in a certain manner (kann marda), and the only safe thing is to turn back. When going through a village street it means bad luck to meet a one eyed man, or to see a rabbit or an owl when going anywhere. In some places it is thought unlucky to meet a village head-man, or lambardar, or a Brahman with fresh caste marks on his forehead when first starting out in the morning.

Some days are more auspicious than others. A Chuhra will hesitate to begin a new work on Thursday, for it "will remain cold" (Thanda rahega) and won't progress as

it should. Around Amritsar the Chuhra women won't wash their hair on Tuesday.



Village Shrine with Emblem of Shiva

## CHAPTER V

### FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHUHRA RELIGION

In some particulars the religion of the Chuhras is highly developed, and cannot be classed as primitive. Nor can it be used as a basis for study of the origin of religion in general. There is, perhaps, no need of an attempt to classify it according to any popular criterion used in estimating religious development. To attempt to make any graduated scale of religions, assuming a progressive movement through such stages as magic, fetishism, totemism, etc., is to fall into a snare. For the evolution of religions, like development in any other realms of nature, is neither in a straight line, nor through any series of discrete, orderly categories.

Chuhra religion possesses, however, certain elements common to most primitive, as well as to many more highly developed, religions, which may properly be considered as primary. They are not necessarily the result of diffusion, but are widespread because they represent some of the fundamental reactions of men to their environment. They are parallel developments of common human activities under similar stimuli. Of such an origin are those religious practices which are designed to influence food



supply, personal safety, and the begetting of children. They arise from universal factors of economic need, fear, and the reproductive instinct.

The first of the three factors is probably the most potent, and issues in the largest variety of religious activities. In Chuhra worship, the economic motive is evident everywhere. For instance, the burial of a jar of seeds under the shrine, as cited in the description of places of worship, can hardly have any significance other than the procuring of aid from the deity for fertility in field and crop. The establishment of a guardian shrine near the common well by Chuhras of Kotkapura was to insure adequate water supply in that dry territory, and to prevent the walls of the well from falling in. The pouring out of milk to Naugazwala and Sher Shah, and the offerings of foods and grains to Balmik are certainly of economic significance. More striking still is the fact that the chief congregational worship of the year is at the time of the greatest economic crisis, the harvest season. Sita, "Goddess of the Furrow," is fittingly part of the book adopted by the Chuhras as their sacred literature.

Personal safety is the next great motive to be observed in the development. Presence of Mata Devi, and other deities of disease in the Chuhra pantheon, Gugga, the master of snakes, and prevalence of charms and omens, all

are witnesses to this motive. In fact, when questioned regarding his worship, and the reason for his religious activities, the Chuhra usually answers that it is all "dar de mare," "because of fear." The only exception to this general rule is in the case of Balmik, whom the Chuhra professes to love.

The reproductive instinct in religion is expressed, not only in the actual steps taken to secure conception, in such instances as the worship of the Bibrian, but in all the safeguards and taboos surrounding marriage, pregnancy, and births.

The universal presence of spirits, incarnations, "possessions," etc. in primitive beliefs, in much the same form as displayed by Chuhra religion, is, no doubt, the natural outgrowth of the questions involved in occurrences of birth, death, sleep, and dreams.

So much of Chuhra worship is individual, that at first glance one might infer that the social element was lacking. There are elements, however, which mark the growth of group solidarity, and which open up avenues of group action. The chief feast, or "distribution" is definitely a social act, involving participation of all the members present, together with the deity invoked. It uses the thing universally recognized as a symbol of community action, namely the partaking of a common meal.

In connection with exorcism, spirit possession, charms, etc., there arises the question of the relation of

magic to religion. By some writers magic is hardly considered to be a part of religion at all. Frazer seems to make an age of magic precede the age of religion in human consciousness, or at least magic is placed only on the borderline of religion. In the case of the Chuhras no such discrimination can be made, for not only does magic co-exist with highly developed religious forms, but it always has a religious significance. In fact, magical power is exercised only by religious men. Conversely, some men are accounted religious solely on the grounds of their dealings in the occult. In all probability magical rites arose in connection with emotions which were the outgrowth of utilitarian activities. They were habitual acts accomplished by emotions, and because the emotions were observed in connection with these certain acts and possibly sounds also, the sounds and acts themselves assumed the position of power-possessing phenomena. Thus, the act of fighting an enemy is accompanied by strong emotion. It is found that the emotion can be reproduced by re-enacting the activities, such as in pantomimic ceremonies. It is an easy step to the idea that, since a similar emotion is produced, a similar effect in the enemy must likewise be produced. Magic, then, is the performance of symbolic acts, usually of a kind accompanied by definite emotions, which are believed to be projectively efficacious. This view of magic helps explain such things as the self-induced frenzy of the

"bhagat" in soothsaying, and in control of spirits and disease.

Further development of the occult influence idea is illustrated in the case of belief in the power of the evil eye, an almost universal fact. Its genesis is seen as a logical outcome of the emotions of greed, envy, and hate. These emotions appear along with such activities as, for instance, a look of hate, the pronouncing of a curse, or gestures suggestive of violence. The reaction in the object of the hate is such as to create fear and dread. The atmosphere resulting will easily allow the idea that there is a power in the gesture or look which can harm the object. The victim probably believes it first. His very fear renders him liable to injury, and actual harm may result. The argument, then, for power of the evil eye, or of magical injury, is an argument from effect to cause.

Another widespread custom in religion, present also in Chuhra worship, is the use of fire. Fire contains an element of mystery, and is universally regarded with reverence probably because it has the power to transfer things from the realm of the seen to that of the unseen. Add to this the thought of the value of fire to primitive man, the difficulty he experienced in obtaining and sustaining it, and its occasional mastery over him, and we have sufficient grounds for explaining its universal religious significance.

Use of drugs, frenzy, and other such phenomena hold their place because of the mystery of their action on men. A man in ecstasy, or under the influence of "bhang" is "out of himself," hence mysterious and fearsome.

All the above factors of Chuhra religion, then, may be regarded as primary, because they are marks of religion all over the world. They can be recognized everywhere, though they may be modified in form by their particular surroundings.

The remaining features of Chuhra religion are probably borrowings. Having been counted for many centuries as within the fold of Hinduism, the Chuhras have incorporated into their own system many orthodox Hindu customs. Balmik is Hindu, as well as many other devis and devtas. Dravidian elements borrowed, (unless the Chuhras are indeed of Dravidian origin) are totemism, and worship of Bhairon and Chandi.

Non-Hindu ideas of one supreme God, life after death, heaven, a mediator, angels, etc., can hardly be explained except as borrowings from Muhammedanism and Christianity. With the former the Chuhras have been in contact for many generations.

Chuhra religion lacks the moral discrimination of Hinduism, and has no real parallel to the Hindu "bhakti," or personal devotion. On the other hand the Chuhra escapes some of the pessimism of strict Hinduism, in spite of the apparent reasons he has to feel the weight of his surroundings.

Individual Chuhra morality is, in general, based simply on standards demanded by his social position and by his own group. This situation may be valuable in so far as it merges the individual with his fellows, but it lacks the higher bases of moral action which may be found in motives of goodwill and kindness.

## CONCLUSION

### PROSPECTS FOR THE CHUHRA

There are indications that the outcaste man, in North India at least, may disappear altogether. The national awakening of the country has penetrated even to the Chuhras. For the first time in a thousand years they are questioning the justice of the social system which classes them as untouchables, and are ceasing to regard it as inevitable.

During the war many Chuhras enlisted in the army as "Mazhabi Sikhs," and came back with a new self respect and a dissatisfaction with their old status. No one can say exactly what line the Chuhras will take in ridding themselves of their disabilities, but we have only to compare the last two census reports of the Punjab to see that a movement out of "Chuhradom" has already begun. In 1921 there were 175,000 fewer Chuhras listed than in 1911. In Lahore district alone the number fell 20,000. High death and infant mortality rates cannot explain such a decrease. But presence of more than 40,000 Mazhabi Sikhs in the Punjab, and an increase within the last ten years, of 90,000 in the number of Christians in Lahore Division alone, indicates where some of them may have gone.

Not only are the Chuhras themselves reaching toward social freedom, but powerful external influences are

also at work. Government schools are, in theory at least, now open to Chuhra boys. More powerful still is the movement launched by Mr. Gandhi to wipe out unjust discrimination against the outcastes. He sets forth his reasons in an article that appeared in the "Survey" of Dec. 1, 1925. In it he says, "This suppression of a large number of human beings has left an indelible mark on the suppressors themselves, and the canker of untouchability is eating into the vitals of Hinduism, so much so that it has degraded what was at one time a noble institution." That Mr. Gandhi sees abolition of this system as a necessary prerequisite to home rule is apparent, for he includes this sentence. "It is the accepted creed of enlightened Hindus that swaraj is unattainable without the removal of the curse." He takes an optimistic view of the matter when he says, "My conviction is that the effort is bearing fruit, and that before long Hinduism will have purified itself of the sin of untouchability."

While many Hindu leaders take issue with Mr. Gandhi on this point, his stand cannot but have great weight in the thinking of New India, and it will be one more factor in the struggle of the Chuhra, along with all his outcaste brethren, toward freedom.



## GLOSSARY

Ai - O! or Oh!

Ain - Come

Allah - God

Ankar - God

Ap - Yourself

Ata - Flour

Aur - And, or More

Baba - A title of respect

Badam - Almond

Bajanwali - Hawk

Bala - Evil

Banne - Over, Across

Batain - Tell

Bera - Boat

Bhagat - Priest

Bhagati - Priestcraft

Bhaian - ~~Brothers~~

Bhang - Hemp

Bhi - Also

Bhura - Brown

Bhut - Ghost

Bolo - Speak, or Say

Chamar - Leatherworker

Chand - Moon

Charas - A drug

Chati - Thirty six

Chela - Disciple

Chichak - Smallpox

Chitian - White

Dargahe - Heaven

Dewa - A god

Dharti - Earth

Dhundkar - Darkness

Diwe - A lamp

Diya - Gave

Do - Two

Ek - One

Eko - One

Faqir - A religious beggar

Gagan - Heavens

Gayi - Went

Ghallin - Send

Goth - Tribe

Gur - Crude sugar

Guru - Teacher

Hai - Is

Hakim - Doctor

Halwa - A sweetmeat

Hissedar - Shareholder

Horia - Became, or Was

Huqqa - A tobacco pipe

Iho - This same

Jag - World

Jag - A special worship

Jagdian - Leaping, or Living

Jal - Water

Jalbimbi - Primeval waters

Jama - Clothing

Jarawan - Matted locks

Jat - A farmer

Jatan - Matted locks

Jhanda - Flag

Jhulde - Waving

Jikar - Description, Story

Jogo - Ages

Jotianwali - Flames (the one of)

Ka, or Ki - Of

Kachil - A ghost

Kai - Several

Kali - Black

Kash Kas - Poppy seed

Katin - Spin

Kaun - Who

Khain - Eat

Khel - Play

Kull - All

Lachian - Cardemom seeds  
Lain - Bring  
Lakh - A hundred thousand  
Lare - Fight, or Sting  
Luban - Incense  
  
Mabuba - Beloved  
Maha - Great  
Mai - Mother  
Mantra - A charm  
Manu - An ancient law-giver  
Mari - A shrine  
Marna - To strike  
Mata - Smallpox  
Mazdur - Laborer  
Milia - Was, or is found  
Mirasi - A professional singer  
Momano - O Worshippers  
  
Na - Not (prohibitive)  
Nain - (obs) Name  
Nam - Name  
Narangkar - One, Single  
Naranyan - Creator  
Naugazwala - The nine-yard one  
  
Pahinia - Put on (a garment)  
Pani - Water  
Par - Beyond  
Parmeshwar - God

Parshad - A sweet meat

Pas - Near, With

Patasi - A sweet

Paun - Air

Phir - Again

Phunk - Breath

Piyare - Beloved

Pukare - To call out

Rabb - God

Rag - Tune

Ragi - A singer

Rahega - Will remain

Rakhin - Put

Rakhshasa - A ghost

Ram - God

Rihon (obs.) Remained

Rushanai - Light

Sadhu - A religious beggar

Sain - A title for a Sadhu

Sajhe - Made

Sahansi - Hundreds

Sanun - To us

Sapp - Snake

Saunf - Aniseed

Sepi - A servant

Shabad - A song

Sitla - Smallpox

Siyani - Knowing or wise one

Smadh - A shrine

Sukh - Rest, or Peace

Sun - Hear

Suraj - Sun

Tadon - Then

Taga - A sacred cord

Taki - In order that

Tan - Body

Tare - Stars

Tarle - Time, or Period

Tawa - Cooking iron

Tere - Your

Thamb - Support

Than - A shrine

Thanda - Cold

Tiragi - A string

Tudh - Boundary

Tum - You

Wandara - Distribution

Wan Than - Tree

Wasakh - A month

Wuhi - The same

Yan - O! or Oh!

Yar - Friend

Zat - Caste

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